THE TRUE HISTORY OF RANODU, KOYELU, IMOTA AND IKORODU: A Response to Mr. Michael Montova Oladeyi Ijaodola

Ikorodu Ambassadors Group | Facebook Platform - Original Essay

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The study of Ijebu-Remo history is not a matter of nomenclature, pride, or reputational contest. It is a disciplined inquiry into chronology, documentary evidence, and the internal consistency of oral testimony. Only when timelines, titles, and ritual jurisdictions align can a historical narrative be regarded as trustworthy.

This paper is offered in that spirit. It proceeds, point by point, to demonstrate how the traditions concerning Ranodu, Koyelu, Imota, and Ikorodu must be properly located in time and authority.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF IMOTA AND THE STATUS OF RANODU

The converging evidence — both documentary and traditional — points to one clear conclusion: the origin of Imota lies in the founding activity of Prince Adekoya Ofirigidi Adekogbe, son of Awujale Anikinaiya Fugbajoye, who reigned between 1821 and 1854.

He bore the title Oloja. Within Ijebu constitutional practice, an Oloja signified an Oba exercising delegated authority under the suzerainty of the Awujale. In Imota, his memory persists as "Oba Ofirigidi Oloshii Akomu."

Most crucially, the physical and ritual nucleus of his settlement was — and remains — Itun Opopo. Such a location is not merely a residential site; it embodies institutional meaning. At Itun Opopo are housed the Ipebi Oba, the Osugbo grove, and the cultic structures of Oro Ologunmogbo, Agemo Esuwele, Eluku, and Opa of the Imota town polity.

Institutions of that kind do not emerge by accident. They are deliberately established by founders to anchor social order, spiritual jurisdiction, and law. Put plainly: such frameworks do not arise from later arrivals after a town has already taken shape. They are erected at the beginning of political life and thereafter endure as reference points by which later generations can verify origin.

Against this background, the circulating Ranodu-Obaruwa narrative — claiming that Imota was founded by Ranodu as a descendant of Awujale Obaruwa — fails to withstand the evidence. Indeed, the very account marshalled to sustain that assertion contains admissions that erode it from within.

The narrative itself states:

> *"At Agudugbun, Ranodu observed flames from far away and decided to investigate; he met some hunters named Ofirigidi, a man from Oke Orundun and Ojoyeruku, a man from Ijebu Ode. Ofirigidi instructed Ranodu to move a short distance to Ehindi, now known as Itun Onabu, and settle there."*

Two decisive inferences follow from this excerpt. First, a person who receives direction regarding where to settle is, by that fact alone, a settler, not a founder. Founders establish the core; settlers integrate themselves into a route already laid. Second, Oke Orundun, as invoked in that account, denotes an inland port around Erebe Ijebu — through which Oloja Adekoya Ofirigidi Adekogbe and his entourage sailed to found Imota, acting upon his father's directive to secure the corridor of the Ikosi lagoon port/market.

Thus, the encounter at Agudugbun was not a meeting in untouched wilderness among equals. It was a meeting between a founder operating an established circuit and a party seeking placement — an interaction characteristic of settlement, not independent origination.

The very topography of Imota confirms this relationship. The foundational institutions of the town are concentrated at Itun Opopo. Eyindi, or Ehin-Odi ("behind the town wall"), lies beyond that core. Eyindi is not the initial ritual jurisdiction. Rather, it is an extramural allocation assigned to Ranodu Atankale Odusa and other Ijebu-Remo immigrants. Even today, Eyindi remains the base of the constituted lines of the Ranodu Chieftaincy, while Itun Opopo stands as the recognized center of the town and compound of Oloja Adekoya Anikinaiya and his court.

In town history, such spatial arrangement is seldom accidental. It reflects political and ritual decisions: who holds the core, and who is placed at the periphery of expansion.

Ranodu is of Makun extraction. The wife of Oloja Adekoya Ofirigidi, Princess Ikupoloro, was herself a daughter of the king (Ewusi) of Makun. Through this connection, Ranodu obtained both information and patronage, and was allocated land at Eyindi as a client within the broader Oloja Ofirigidi structure. His arrival at Imota was therefore facilitated by existing kinship ties rather than conquest or independent foundation.

Both Ranodu and the Oro Liworu over which he presides belong to the Makun-Sagamu tradition. Their ancestral seat is at Ranodu Village on the Simawa axis of Makun land. In Makun tradition, Ewusi — a daughter of Awujale Obaruwa — was the mother of Arapetu and Liworu of Makun, and of Obaloran of Ode-Remo. Ranodu functions as the custodian-priest of the Liworu deity.

It would therefore be inconsistent — historically and ritually — for Ranodu to be framed simultaneously as a son of Obaruwa and as the priest of his own nephew's deity in the manner suggested by the competing Imota narrative.

II. THE DEVELOPMENTS OF 1894 AND THE SUBSEQUENT EVOLUTION OF THE RANODU STOOL

The elevation of the Ranodu lineage did not originate from the act of founding. It arose from circumstances within the Ofirigidi house toward the end of the nineteenth century.

First, Oloja Adekoya Ofirigidi died at Erebe Ijebu.

Second, his only surviving male child, Oyenupebi, having survived an attempt on his life, was removed to Erebe. The consequence was a period of suspended succession at Imota.

At Itun Opopo, the Ofirigidi nucleus, an Olori-Ilu was appointed to oversee affairs. Meanwhile at Ehindi, Ehin-Odi — "behind the town wall" — four families without a prior history of unified kingship or consanguinity — Atankale, Senlu, Lasademo, and Alakan — converged their interests. While Itun Opopo retained caretaker authority, the Ehindi faction exploited the interregnum to press for a new lineage.

Under these conditions, 1894 produced the first ruler, Okumona, popularly referred to as "Olufoworesete" — literally "a ruler created by one's own hands" — a non-royal creation rather than an inherited continuation. He reigned under the title Oloja, demonstrating that legitimacy during this interval still depended upon the recognized constitutional language of the town.

From 1894 to 1936, this new grouping operated within a framework shaped by tradition and supervisory authority. Throughout that period, the Awujale maintained that no new dynasty should be instituted at Imota. The town was required to seek a successor among the descendants of Oloja Adekoya Ofirigidi — even if investigations had to extend as far as Erebe — and the formally recognized title remained Oloja.

This principle is reflected in the submission made to the colonial administration in 1920, contained in the Epe Confidential Report on the Oloja of Imota. There, Imota Community listed Adekoya Ofirigidi as the first Oloja, followed by Okumono and Akideyin.

The implication is unmistakable. The lineage presented itself as an unbroken continuation of the Ofirigidi line to secure recognition. Had nine earlier rulers existed prior to Okumona, their names would likewise have appeared in the 1920 submission.

It is equally important that Oba Awotungashe Shaib, Ranodu of Imota from 1937 to 1949, was the first to bear — and be officially recognized with — the title Ranodu. He was also the first to commit the history of Imota to writing in 1943. In his 1943 account, he named Adekoya Ofirigidi as the founder and first King of Imota, and further asserted that Atankale Ranodu was allocated land by Ofirigidi.

Thereafter, the Awujale and government, having discovered the arrangement orchestrated from 1894, approved the title "Ranodu" in 1937 for the lineage created in 1894. Consequently, the new lineage continued to keep Oba Adekoya Ofirigidi as the founder and first Oloja of Imota until 1956, when it secured full statutory recognition and discarded him since he never belonged therein historically.

That is why Adekoya appears in the 1920 list and in the 1943 account, yet disappears from the regnal records of 1956 and 1990. More significantly, the lineage presented Senlu Olupeoku as the historic Ranodu and converted Ranodu — the personal name of Atankale Odusa — into an Ifa-derived title attributed to Senlu.

This construction was challenged and corrected by subsequent records: Oba Awotungashe Shaib in 1943, Epe District Officer Kirk (1936), and Mabadeje Tugbobo in 1965 all recorded the same essential fact: that Ranodu belonged to Atankale Odusa, and that he settled at Imota under the authority of Oloja Adekoya Ofirigidi.

The decisive proof is contained within the Ranodu Palace's own publication. In the official Coronation Ceremony Brochure of Oba L.A. Oredoyin, Senlu V, Ranodu of Imota, dated 5th May 1990, and appearing on page 2 under the heading "THE ORIGIN OF THE RANODU OF IMOTA," the following passage is stated verbatim:

> *"Ranodu briefly settled at Idado near Sagamu. Idado is known today as Agbala Imota near Sagamu. In Obedience to Ifa oracle, Ranodu left Idado for Isopo where he and his people had brief rest."*

This candid admission is fatal to any contention regarding Ranodu's antiquity. Idado is not an ancient forested settlement but a contemporary kingdom within Sagamu Local Government Area; its traditional ruler is today styled Radanuwa of Idado. Isopo, likewise, is a quarter of Ofin. Ofin, the seat of the Akarigbo, is among the thirteen towns that assembled in 1872 to form Sagamu as a confederation of Remo towns.

Consequently, a lineage that — through its own palace brochure — locates itself at Idado and Isopo (localities that, by historical record, came into prominence only after the 1872 coalescence directed by Awujale Fidipote), cannot credibly be traced to the son of Awujale Obaruwa, who reigned from 1540 to 1549. To sustain such an assertion would require a man born in the sixteenth century to survive for more than three hundred years, to reside at Sagamu after its establishment, and yet to receive land from a nineteenth-century Oloja Adekoya Ofirigidi.

Accordingly, the proposition that Ranodu was a son of Awujale Obaruwa cannot be maintained.

III. KOYELU AND THE FORMATION OF SAGAMU

Koyelu lived and died at Okun-Owa. At that time, neither the Akarigbo institution as later constituted nor the town of Sagamu existed.

Before 1872, Akarigbo and Remo chiefs occupied a dispersed arrangement of locations: Ikanigbo, Yemule, Okun-Owa, and Orile-Ofin. The settlement of Makun began in 1865. In 1872, Awujale Ademuyewo Fidipote issued a directive commanding the Akarigbo and eleven other Remo chiefs to abandon their scattered settlements and converge with Makun at Sagamu.

Therefore, any claim attributing the foundation of towns to Ranodu or to Akarigbo prior to 1865 is inconsistent with the established chronology.

IV. THE PLACE OF REMO AND IKORODU WITHIN THE IJEBU CONSTITUTION

Remo constituted the westernmost district of the precolonial Ijebu kingdom. It encompassed thirty-three towns and lay between Lagos and Ibadan. Ijebu was organized as an imperial state of seven districts and three provinces, all subordinate to the Awujale.

In 1938, the British administration constituted Remo as a district within Ijebu Province, with an annual contribution to the Awujale's stipend. Remo did not exist outside Ijebu sovereignty.

On the lagoon frontier, Ijebu policy required authorization from the Awujale for settlement. This is corroborated in the account of Rev. T. J. Bowen in 1864 and reinforced in the declaration of "Ijebu mure ajeji iwo" — going to Ijebu, it is inaccessible to strangers.

Ikorodu, Epe, and other lagoon ports had been formed and under Awujale's authority from the fifteenth century, serving as contact points with Portuguese traders beginning in 1471. In this context, Koyelu contracted marriage with a daughter of the Awujale. Her son, Oga, together with other sons of the Awujale, was stationed at Ikorodu to supervise the outpost. They were invested with a Coronet of authority, which was later withdrawn and restored in 1955 by Awujale Daniel Adesanya, Gbelegbuwa II.

V. CONCLUSION

The documentary sources bearing on these issues converge into consistency. The Epe Confidential Report of 1920 identifies Adekoya Ofirigidi Adekogbe as the founder and first Oloja of Imota. The account of Ranodu Awotungashe, 1943 and Mabudeje Tugbobo of 1965 record that Ranodu settled under Oloja Adekoya Ofirigidi. The proceedings of the Martindale Commission of 1937 address the origin of Ikorodu and its Coronet and the position of Awujale overlordship. The official Coronation Ceremony Brochure of Oba L.A. Oredoyin, Senlu V, Ranodu of Imota, dated 5th May 1990, admits the Idado and Isopo sojourn after 1872. Finally, the Terms of Settlement of 17 January 2016 contain an acknowledgment by Ranodu in Council of settler status.

Historical understanding demands that oral tradition be assessed alongside documentary evidence and chronological data. When these strands are brought into alignment, it becomes possible to distinguish between foundation and settlement, continuity and later consolidation, and an institution's origin from a lineage's subsequent recognition.

May the record endure for posterity.

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